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# Retention

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# Retention

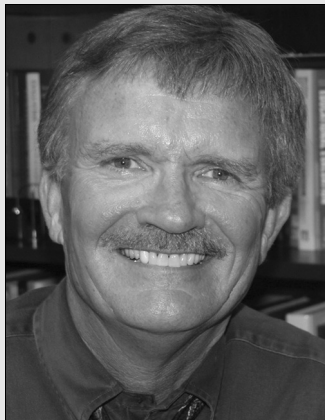
**Michael Simonson**

There is an assumption about distance education that many students drop out—do not complete a course or a program—and that this drop-out rate is significantly higher than what is reported for traditional instruction. Certainly, while it is possible to argue that assumptions about student drop outs in online education are really myths, it is more useful to talk about student retention—what distance educators can do to increase the likelihood that online students, learning at a distance, will

persevere and continue the course, certification, or degree program to completion.

Actually, the topic of student retention is a major one. Articles dealing with retention of online learners can be found throughout the literature of the field, and some of these papers offer important suggestions that can be readily used by instructors and leaders. Christopher Hill (2010) offered 11 tips for improving retention of online learners:

1. Establish an early alert program to identify students who are not participating
2. Offer, even require an online tutoring program
3. Continue to offer tutoring throughout the program
4. Develop a student success course that gives learners needed skills that help them become better online learners
5. Establish learning communities—real or virtual
6. Develop peer tutoring options
7. Clearly and succinctly orient learners to distance education
8. Measure what is happening—retention, successes, problems, barriers
9. Make the individual course the center of interest to promote retention
10. Read and apply the research and literature—there are many scientists



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